

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM - KY-FD-IM-S-03-07

TO: All Food Service Directors/Agency Administrators

FROM: Pat Cassetty, Director
Division of Food Distribution

DATE: February 12, 2003

SUBJECT: Current Status of Irradiation

Current Status of Irradiation

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 states that USDA cannot prohibit the use of irradiation on food used in government nutrition programs. In keeping with the Law, USDA is working to provide irradiated red meat for use in nutrition programs. Recent news articles that claim irradiated meat provided by USDA is already being fed to school children are **inaccurate**. USDA **has not offered** irradiated meat as an ordering option to any state. Irradiation **is not replacing** food inspections or pathogen testing but is simply another tool in ensuring a safe food supply.

There is a great deal of conflicting information surrounding the use of irradiation in meat as a food safety tool. Minnesota submitted a proposal to USDA to provide educational materials on irradiation, and USDA approved that proposal. Minnesota is in the process of **developing and testing** educational materials about irradiation for use with media, school boards, parents, teachers, state and school administration, and the general public. Once USDA offers irradiated red meat to states, it will strictly be an optional commodity--it will not replace existing red meat; therefore, state agencies and/or school districts will make a local decision regarding whether or not to utilize irradiated meat in their individual school nutrition programs.

Also, irradiated meats are already offered commercially for sale to the general public in various parts of the country, as well as being used in a major fast food chain in the Minnesota area.

We hope this answers some of your questions on irradiation and as additional information is made available we will keep you informed.

To keep up on the latest information pleas go to the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) web site <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/topics/irrmenu.htm>. Be sure to add this site to your Favorites list for future reference for information about irradiation. You may also reach the FSIS site by going to our website and looking in the Links section.

PC/jb